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Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

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FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT
CARRIED OUT IN
LITHUANIA
FROM 23 NOVEMBER 2015 TO 27 NOVEMBER 2015
IN ORDER TO
DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS ON ANIMAL WELFARE OF ACTIVITIES
PROMOTING COMPETENCE OF ANIMAL HANDLERS AND KEEPERS

In response to information provided by the Competent Authority, any factual error noted in the draft report has been corrected; any clarification appears in the form of a footnote.

Executive Summary

This audit took place in Lithuania from 23-to 27 November 2015 to determine the effectiveness and suitability of the activities to ensure staff looking after or handling farm animals possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence. The audit focussed on the pig farming and the slaughterhouse sectors.

Lithuania has implemented the relevant EU requirements concerning training of pig farmers and slaughterhouse staff. The training is well received and considered useful by both sectors, and the results of State Food and Veterinary Service controls indicate that training is effective in both sectors as well.

The Lithuanian training system for welfare at slaughter includes a best practice as there is a practical exam where the trainee demonstrates that he can adequately perform the practical aspects of handling, restraining and stunning.

The report makes no recommendations to the Lithuanian authorities

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
EU	European Union
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
LAAS	Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service (<i>Lietuvos žemės ūkio konsultavimo tarnyba</i>)
SFVS	State Food and Veterinary Service (<i>Valstybinė Maisto ir Veterinarijos Tarnyba</i>)

1 INTRODUCTION

This audit took place in Lithuania from 23 to 27 November 2015 as part of the planned audit programme of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO). An opening meeting was held with the Lithuanian competent authorities on 23 November 2015. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the audit were confirmed by the audit team and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the audit was requested.

The audit team comprised two auditors from the FVO and was accompanied throughout the audit by representatives from the Central Competent Authority the State Food and Veterinary Service (SFVS, *Valstybinė Maisto ir Veterinarijos Tarnyba*).

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the audit was to determine the effectiveness and suitability of the activities to ensure staff looking after or handling farm animals possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence.

The FVO had pre-selected the pig sector for review and the SFVS had been asked to select one sector from the three remaining sectors (broilers, transport and slaughter) for which there are also specific EU requirements regarding operator competence. The SFVS selected the slaughter sector and therefore the scope of the audit was on the relevant activities in those sectors.

In pursuit of the objectives, the following meetings were held:

Meetings		Comments
Competent authority	3	As well as an opening and final meeting, another meeting took place with official veterinarians responsible for official controls in pig farms and slaughterhouses
Pig sector	2	With pig farmers trained by the SFVS and/or by accredited consultants
Slaughter sector	2	One meeting with slaughterhouse staff that attended training prior to 2013 and another with slaughterhouse staff trained since 2013.
Training institutions	4	One meeting with the institution that trains and accredits consultants to provide "cross-compliance" training (including welfare of pigs) to the farming sector. One with an institution that provides cross-compliance training to farmers and another with the institution that provides training to the slaughterhouse sector. One meeting as well with the SFVS as providers of animal welfare training to farmers.

3 LEGAL BASIS

The audit was carried out under the general provisions of EU legislation and, in particular Article 45 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.

EU legal acts quoted in this report are provided in Annex I and refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

4 BACKGROUND

The EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015 (COM(2012) 6 final/2) that was adopted in January 2012 indicated that one of the key issues which needed to be addressed was that many stakeholders lack sufficient knowledge about animal welfare. Subsequently a study on animal welfare education was launched to identify the animal welfare topics which should be included in the professional curricula of those involved with animals and which actions would be needed to improve awareness among those professions. This study should be finalised in 2015.

This series of FVO audits aims to identify activities that are suitable and effective in delivering high levels of knowledge and competence to the professional sectors on animal welfare, and therefore achieve a high level of compliance with animal welfare requirements.

Nine Member States received a letter of formal notice at the beginning of 2013 for failure to enforce group housing of sows. There have also been high levels of non-compliance regarding provision of manipulable material and avoidance of routine tail docking of pigs and the Commission has been developing guidelines on these topics. For these reasons, professional competence in the pig sector was pre-selected for this series of audits.

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE PIG FARMING SECTOR

Legal requirements

Article 4 of Directive 98/58/EC.

Article 6 of Directive 2008/120/EC.

Findings

1. The pig farming sector in Lithuania has a few farms with high numbers of pigs, many small commercial farms, and even more farms that seasonally have one single pig for fattening for own consumption. According to the SFVS approximately 90% of the pigs in Lithuania are in 50 farms. The number of registered farms increased significantly in recent years because of the African Swine fever outbreaks that resulted in increased registration requirements and controls concerning the keeping of pigs.

	Number of pig farms	Number of pigs
2012	5 539	518 466
2013	7 208	514 031
2014	20 009	552 300

2. Animal welfare training for pig keepers on the requirements of Directives 98/58 and 2008/120 is provided mainly in two ways. One is via the Centre for LEADER Programme and Agricultural Training Methodology, under the Ministry of Agriculture, which makes training available as part of "Cross-compliance" programmes supported by rural development funds. The other is via the SFVS Local Units.
3. "Cross-compliance" trainers are consultants that have been trained and are accredited under the LEADER programme with the SFVS Chief Veterinary Inspectors providing part of the training to these consultants. 116 such consultants have been trained between June 2011 and October 2015.
4. The institutions that can provide "Cross-compliance" training must themselves also be formally accepted by the LEADER Programme and currently there are 12 such accepted institutions in Lithuania.
5. Each "Cross-compliance" course spans two days and includes species other than pigs as well as subjects other than animal welfare with currently one day of the course dedicated to animal welfare. These courses are highly focused on providing knowledge to farmers about which are the relevant legal requirements because it is compliance with those requirements that will allow them to receive the "Cross-compliance" payments. The emphasis of the training is therefore on detailing and explaining the legal requirements, not on the science or technology of pig production and management. Some course time is nevertheless available for that side of things.
6. The two major providers of "Cross-compliance" training are the Lithuanian Agricultural Advisory Service (LAAS, *Lietuvos žemės ūkio konsultavimo tarnyba*) and the Chamber of Agriculture. LAAS trained a total of 3381 farmers from 2012 to 2015 and the Chamber of Agriculture trained a total of 7798 farmers from 2012 to 2014 (in both cases not all of these would be pig farmers). The course was fully subsidised until 2014 but from 2015 it is partially subsidised and part paid by the participants.
7. The audit team was informed by LAAS that the courses have a theoretical part with lectures and discussions, and a practical part with visit to a farm for a demonstration of how the cross-compliance requirements are implemented.
8. The Centre for LEADER programme does a sample evaluation of at least 10% of all the courses covered by the programme, including cross-compliance. LEADER staff visit the location, attend the lectures, observe if there are queries from attendees, how those are

handled and how the material is explained. In addition at the end of the course the participants, in these 10% sampled courses, receive a form to provide feedback about the training. The results of these evaluations are taken into account to make any modifications needed to the training material and this year for example additional visual material had been included in the animal welfare part of the cross-compliance course.

9. The training provided by the SFVS local units is free of charge, covers also areas additional to animal welfare and is adapted for the local farmers' needs as determined by the SFVS local units. The way this SFVS training is organised and divulged ensures that in addition to the bigger and/or better informed farmers, which are more likely to have applied for cross-compliance payments and training, also the smaller farmers are informed, and can learn, about relevant animal welfare requirements.
10. SFVS training, when including pig welfare, fully covered the requirements of Directives 98/58 and 2008/120. Adaptations according to need included for example in 2012 a major emphasis on animal welfare particularly in relation to group housing of sows because of the deadline of 1 January 2013 for group housing of sows. Additional areas discussed in more detail by SFVS training included manipulable materials and on farm euthanasia of weak or sick animals.
11. In recent years the main emphasis in SFVS training was on African Swine Fever and bio-security, with the animal welfare component of each training much reduced. The SFVS local Units trained a total of 8118 pig farmers from 2012 to 2014.
12. The SFVS evaluates the effectiveness of pig keepers training (be it via "Cross-compliance training or SFVS training) through the results of SFVS inspections at pig farms.

Further information to support conclusions

13. The Centre for LEADER programme considers that as "Cross-compliance" training combines several related agricultural production subjects its strengths are that: more participants are attracted to the courses and receive better information, and participants and organisers benefit from reduced costs. While its weaknesses are that: knowledge and skills cover more than one area, therefore their transfer is more concentrated and there is not enough time for looking deeper into/acquiring more practical knowledge of a separate topic.
14. Training organisers noted that practical training on holdings (e.g. about accommodation for farmed animals), review of video material, photos, specialised publications, performance of tasks, discussions, work in groups and practical exercises was particularly effective, while only theoretical training (lectures) was rated as less effective.
15. The farmers met by the audit team all indicated that they were satisfied with the courses that they had attended and did not identify any areas for improvement. As additional

reference sources of animal welfare information, after completing the training, all farmers mentioned the SFVS as the first one. Private veterinarians, agricultural consultants and the internet were also mentioned.

16. Training organisers also considered SFVS publications such as “Welfare of farmed animals in Lithuania”, “Welfare and transport of farmed animals”, other information publications, booklets on welfare of farmed animals, animal care and accommodation as useful sources of information that they indicated to their trainees.

Additional activities

17. The Lithuanian Pig Producers Association training activities have an emphasis on strictly production matters. Nevertheless since 2010 pig welfare has been a regular subject of discussion in the annual General Assembly and/or Board meeting.
18. The Chamber of Agriculture also organised a Farmers Summit and two conferences in 2013, and another in 2014, which included pig welfare requirements as one of the subjects covered. The number of participants ranged between 3 000 for the Farmers Summit and seven for one of the conferences.

Effect on compliance

19. Farmers met were generally knowledgeable about animal welfare requirements. Farmers with several staff informed the audit team that they had given guidance to their workers, and issued written instructions on how they should carry out their tasks properly.
20. The SFVS sees the cross-compliance payments and reduction in those payments in case of non-compliance as one of the main drivers for improved competence and compliance with animal welfare requirements. These payments started from 1/1/2013 and any non-compliance reported can cause a deduction of between 1 to 5% on cross-compliance payment. If it is a repeat offence the deduction may go up to 20% and the possibility of these payment deductions being applied has been a strong incentive in increasing animal welfare compliance.
21. SFVS inspections show high levels of compliance with animal welfare requirements and a progressive reduction in the number of non-compliances along the years. The SFVS did not have precise information on percentages of routine tail docking but farmers met informed the audit team that tail docking was still needed, and practiced, mostly in the bigger pig farms.

Conclusions on training activities in the pig farming sector

22. There is suitable training for pig keepers which covers the relevant legal requirements.
23. SFVS training targets a wider range of pig farmers than "Cross-compliance" training helping to facilitate the extension of knowledge and competence about pig welfare to a

bigger population of farmers.

24. The SFVS currently reports a low number of animal welfare non-compliances at pig farms, and there has been a progressive decrease in these non-compliances, indicating that training has produced satisfactory results on animal welfare knowledge and competence of pig keepers.

5.2 TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE SECTOR

Legal requirements

Article 21 (a) and (c) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (hereafter the Regulation).

Findings

25. Order No B1-1008 of the Director of the SFVS of 11 December 2012 regulates the training, organisation of the exams and issuing of certificates of competence to persons killing animals and carrying out slaughter and related operations in slaughterhouses and is in line with the Regulation.
26. The SFVS has designated the Continuous Veterinary Training and Consulting Centre of the Veterinary Academy of the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences as a delegated body (currently the only one) to carry out the training of personnel involved in killing and related operations.
27. The training programme must have a minimum of 8 hours of theoretical plus four hours of practical training, followed by a theoretical and a practical exam. The content/modules of each training course are adjusted by the Veterinary Academy to the needs of the participants and submitted for approval by the SFVS prior to the start of each course. If for example there are no participants from poultry slaughterhouses the module for poultry is not included and more course time is available for the other subjects.
28. Trainers are veterinarians from the Veterinary Academy and training takes place at the premises of the Veterinary Academy and, sometimes, at slaughterhouses.
29. The training materials covered the relevant points from the Regulation. However the material was expansive with regards to: performing checks, and monitoring, of effectiveness of stunning and deciding if additional stunning is needed, particular tasks and records of activity of the animal welfare officer.
30. After the training there is an examination composed of a theoretical part and a practical part. The examinations are performed exclusively by the SFVS local Units. An exam committee is designated and produces at least 50 multiple choice questions for the theoretical part and identifies three tasks to be performed as the

practical part. The pass rate for the theoretical part is 70% and for the practical part it is 66%.

31. The Veterinary Academy provides the SFVS with the following information per trainee prior to the examination: the date, place and duration of training; the identification of the trainee; the slaughter related operations and/or the slaughtering operations (restraint, stunning and bleeding) which can be carried out by that trainee; for which species the trainee has received training and about which types of equipment including restraint and stunning methods; the registration number and date of the training certificate.
32. The 50 exam questions always include some general questions with the information provided by the Veterinary Academy about the trainee being used by the SFVS to draft the questions specific to the tasks of the applicant. For example line workers that carry out lairage operations and do not stun and bleed the animals will have questions related to evaluating the animals upon arrival, handling at lairage, and so on but will not have any questions related to stunning or bleeding. Line workers that perform the restraint, stunning and bleeding will have specific questions on those areas but not on lairaging. Animal welfare officers will have questions covering all aspects of the operations from arrival until the moment of confirmation of death of the animal.
33. This same approach is followed with the selection of tasks for the practical exam for line workers and animal welfare officers with the tasks selected for each trainee reflecting their respective responsibilities along the slaughter operations. The practical exam tasks are performed by the trainee, under observation by the SFVS exam committee, at the slaughterhouse where the trainee will be/is employed.
34. The certificates of competence are issued by the SVFS Local Units and the certificates mention species, operations and stunning methodology as required by the Regulation.
35. Slaughterhouse staff that can provide evidence that they already had three years of relevant professional experience and had attended training prior to 1 January 2013 can be exempted from doing the practical examination but must still pass the theoretical exam. However, in effect every applicant that received a certificate based on experience had done both the theory and practical exams.
36. The SFVS issued 319 certificates based on training and theoretical plus practical examination, 263 for line workers and 56 for animal welfare officers, and 90 certificates based on relevant professional experience, 64 to line workers and 26 to animal welfare officers.
37. Three of the certificates (two to animal welfare officers and one to a line worker) issued to people qualified prior to 2013 have been withdrawn, as envisaged by Art. 22 of the

Regulation, due to animal welfare non-compliances and the people in question are no longer allowed to carry out slaughter and related operations.

38. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the training courses:

- Trainees fill in a feedback form at the end of each course about: the course, the trainers and if additional areas of interest should be included. The feedback is always very positive and the trainees did not request additional information on any areas;
- The SFVS carried out two on-the-spot evaluations in 2015 through observation of the course given. One during a course on cattle, sheep and goats and another during a course on rabbits and fur animals. The evaluation covered the competence of trainers and the training materials. The evaluation results were positive in both cases but the SFVS recommended that the training for fur animals should be split from the one for rabbits. This recommendation has already been taken into account by the Veterinary Academy for future courses;
- SFVS evaluation of the effectiveness of training is also done by directly providing the theoretical and practical exam, as well as through results of official checks at slaughterhouses.

39. Training course materials originally did not include slaughter without stunning because that practice was not allowed in Lithuania. In December 2014 this changed and, if prescribed by religious rites, it is now possible to request approval to perform slaughter without stunning as envisaged by the Regulation. The training provider has prepared a draft module for training that includes slaughter without stunning but no such training application has been received yet.

Further information to support conclusions

40. The Veterinary Academy indicated that practical training at slaughterhouses, video material and photos, performance of tasks, discussions and practical exercises was particularly effective, while only attending lectures was rated as less effective.

41. All slaughterhouse staff met were satisfied with the training courses and materials and mentioned the SFVS as source of further information for animal welfare.

Effect on compliance

42. Slaughterhouse staff met were generally knowledgeable about animal welfare requirements. However, there was some confusion concerning which parameters should be given more weight (and why) to decide if an animal needs to be re-stunned.

43. The SFVS informed that training had positive effects in improving animal welfare mainly with regards to handling and driving of animals. With regards to stunning and bleeding the SFVS considered that animal welfare in those areas was already good, prior

to the Regulation, because national legislation already required specific training for staff performing those tasks.

44. After the change in Lithuanian legislation allowing slaughter without stunning the SFVS received an application from one slaughterhouse to perform this type of slaughter of bovine animals. The slaughterhouse staff already had certificates of competence for slaughter with stunning so the SFVS discussed the issues with the business operator who then organised additional internal training. The SFVS confirmed that the structure, facilities and operations are in line with the relevant requirements of the Regulation. Additionally the SFVS informed that Certificates of Competence that include this additional slaughtering methodology have not been issued yet to this slaughterhouse staff.

Conclusions on training activities in the slaughterhouse sector

45. There is a suitable training system in place for competence of slaughterhouse staff. Additional to meeting the legal requirements it includes a best practice as there is a practical exam where the trainee demonstrates that he can adequately perform the practical aspects of handling, restraining and stunning.
46. The SFVS have noted improved animal welfare at slaughter indicating that this training is also producing effective results.

6 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Lithuania has implemented the relevant EU requirements concerning training of pig farmers and slaughterhouse staff. The training is well received and considered useful by both sectors and the results of SFVS controls indicate that training is effective in both sectors as well.

The Lithuanian training system for welfare at slaughter includes a best practice as there is a practical exam where the trainee demonstrates that he can adequately perform the practical aspects of handling, restraining and stunning.

7 CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 27 November 2015 with representatives of the competent authorities, at which the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the audit were presented by the audit team.

The competent authority's response to the recommendations can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/rep_details_en.cfm?rep_inspection_ref=2015-7426

ANNEX 1 – LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Reg. 882/2004	OJ L 165, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 191, 28.5.2004, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules
Dir. 2008/120/EC	OJ L 47, 18.2.2009, p. 5-13	Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs
Reg. 1099/2009	OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1-30	Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing